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THE UNITARIAN

A MAGAZINE FOR FREE CHRISTIANS

NEWINGTON GREEN 250th ANNIVERSARY

1708 to 1958, by T. L. Watkins

Newington Green is only about three miles as the crow flies from St. Paul's Cathedral, yet it was, 300 years ago, a secluded place near London where those ministers ejected in 1662 could reside without being over harried by the officers of the law zealous to enforce the "five-mile Act." In fact at least eight, if not more, of them lived there at various times during the next 40 years until the accession of Queen Anne in 1702.

Two of these ministers were Charles Morton, formerly rector of Blisland in Cornwall, and James Ashurst, ejected from a Fellowship at Oxford. They were both Presbyterians and the former established an academy at Newington Green, where among his students were Samuel Wesley and Daniel Defoe. In 1685 Morton left England for America and later became Vice-President of Harvard University, while James Ashurst continued to minister to the small group of dissenters which had established them-

selves in the locality until his death.

The pastor in 1704 was John Russell and he ministered to a congregation most of whose members were in all probability engaged in business in the City. By this time the persecution of the dissenters had abated somewhat from the severity of Charles II, which had caused Morton to leave for America, and it was decided to erect a permanent meeting house in which to worship. This was done in 1708 — 250 years ago. Its site is occupied by the church you see in the picture, and it is still basically the square building that was originally erected, although substantially rebuilt in 1860. However, eight of the original box pews can be seen to this day on either side of the two aisles.

The money to build the meeting house was put up by a City banker named Edward Harrison, possibly a member of the congregation, who in return for his expenditure was paid a rent of £15 per annum. The original tenancy is in the name of Messrs. Mason and Morton. It has not so far been possible to identify these two gentlemen, but it seems likely that the second was a relative of Rev. Charles Morton, possibly his nephew of the same name, a doctor of medicine.

After the death of John Russell in 1714 three out of the next four ministers resigned after varying periods and conformed to the Church of England. All of them had been newly ordained ministers when they came to Newington Green, so perhaps they were tempted at an early age by the opportunities of preferment which the Established Church held out to them.

However, in 1738 we come to the first of many names with honoured associations in our denomination, the Rev. Hugh Worthington, who, after three years, moved to occupy the pulpit at the Great Meeting, Leicester, until his death in 1797. His successor was Rev. Israel Lewis, who was ordained in the meetin house on February 8th, 1743. He wa a Welshman who, although the so of a beneficed clergyman, chose t enter the ministry "not only amon the non-conformists, but in thei most heretical class." It was in thi same year that another, and mor famous Welshman came to liv nearby in Stoke Newington, a chaplain to George Streatfield. Thi was Richard Price, who 15 year later officiated as afternoon preache at the meeting house, and continue as such for 25 years. The Rev. Mr Lewis only spent two years her before settling in Maidstone, wher he lived until 1770.

It was in 1748 that Matthew Raper, a director of the Bank o England, died. Mr. Raper had been treasurer since 1722, and during this time he took steps to establish a "Fund, if contributions should fail that the place might not be shut up abruptly." He was also active in supporting the efforts to gain the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, which prevented dissenters from holding civic office unless they practised "Occasional Conformity"; being a member of the committee of the Protestant Dissenting Deputies. This was a body which in the modern idiom "lobbied" the Whig government of the day under Robert Walpole for relief from the disabling legislation passed in the reigns of Charles II and James II.

The Rev. John Hoyle occupied the pulpit for 10 years until the end of 1757 when he accepted a call to be minister of the newly erected Octagon Chapel at Norwich, in succession to the celebrated Dr. John Taylor.

With his successor, Dr. Richard Price, we can definitely say that Newington Green had become Unitarian. It is impossible briefly to do justice to the character and influence of Dr. Price, theologian, mathematician and economist, who

as as prominent a figure in his day s his great friend Dr. Joseph riestley. Let it suffice to quote his pitaph which is inscribed on the nemorial tablet in the church: "His minent talents were matched by is integrity, simplicity and goodness f heart; his moral dignity by his rofound humility." Dr. Price moved o Hackney in 1783 and became rincipal of the newly founded Hackney College in 1786. His friend nd fellow minister, Dr. Joseph owers, continued at Newington Green until he died in 1799.

For the next forty years the influence of the church was at a low ebb. In 1838 the Rev. Thomas Cromwell along with Andrew Pritchard, the microscopist, re-established the church as a vital force in the upsurge of social responsibility which the "new poverty" of the industrial revolution brought home to the educated classes. A day and Sunday school and domestic mission were established to provide both spiritual and bodily welfare for the less fortunate members of the surrounding population.

After the 1914—18 war, with the growth of social services into the present "Welfare State," many of the societies affiliated to the church, such as the Provident Society, dwindled away, leaving the congregation to return to a concern with its function as a spiritual centre. During the period 1910—1912 the minister was Dr. J. Lionel Tayler who was profoundly moved by the events of the Great War, but was able to reaffirm his faith in man and God in words which are an inspiration to us now in the year of our 250th Anniversary. "All truth is religious; is of God, and leads to God." This is the traditional belief of the little chapel, and if we hold to this belief, and enlarge and deepen it, we shall add our gift to the chapel's future"

ESSEX HALL LECTURE

Ancient Prophecy and Modern Crisis, by Principal F. Kenworthy, M.A., B.D., not only keeps up the standard of Essex Hall Lectures (Lindsey Press, 2s.), but meets a practical need—namely to show how the prophetic books of the Old Testament relate to modern politics. The Rev. A. B. Downing's column in this issue of the *Unitarian* testifies to the value of the Lecture.

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BEHIND ROLLING YEARS

By A. B. Downing

Some of the prophetic writings in the Bible are astonishingly relevant to our 20th century problems, as Principal Kenworthy reminded us in this year's Essex Hall Lecture. Isaiah once solemnly walked barefoot and naked through Jerusalem to demonstrate the futility of depending upon the military might of Egypt, much as we to-day uneasily depend upon the might of America. Jeremiah at one stage in his life believed in "appeasement" and counselled submission to the power of Babylon. He demonstrated his point of view by walking about with a wooden yoke round his neck. People to-day demonstrate about similar problems, e.g. the recent march from London to Aldermaston. The demonstrations differ, but even after more than 2,000 years the problems are much the same.

One of the fundamental truths the prophets seized upon was that there must always be some in this world who suffer for the sake of others. It is one of those inexplicable facts summarised for us in the picture of the Suffering Servant: "the chastisement leading to our welfare was upon him, and by means of his stripes there is healing for us." *Someone* has got to have the moral strength to suffer for what is right. Only religious people, who believe that God is the ultimate explanation of the world, come near to understanding that disturbing truth. The prophets' thoughts were not always our thoughts, but many of the truths they glimpsed apply startlingly to our modern condition. They believed in God, as we do, and could say of Him:

> Wide as the world is Thy Command;
> Vast as eternity Thy love;
> Firm as a rock Thy truth shall stand,
> When rolling years shall cease to move.

CHILDREN'S CORNER

Excitement at the Fai

When Simon, Nippa and Pipp arrived, the fair was settling dow after the official opening. Simo found his spot and they unloade the cart. The two folk sorted ou the equipment; Simon attended t his horse and then made the fire Nippa and Pippa decided to take quick look round the fair.

They inspected the circus animal —lions, elephants, monkeys; the they passed on to the Helter-Skelte the Coconut Shies, the Big Dippe and the Fun House. They were jus going in when suddenly peopl began to shout; and then to ru about aimlessly. As they looked, th running quickened and becam panic-stricken. Nippa and Pipp stood aghast, scarely knowing wha to do. Then from amidst the up roar a cry was echoed and re echoed: "The animals are loose! The animals are loose!" The tw folk took to their heels and foun Simon still at his cart.

"Stay there," he commanded, "an don't move."

They stayed there, their face white, whilst people jostled each other and ran around in circles Eventually the noise died down an the three looked about them. There were very few people—and there were very few animals! Only one in fact, one small monkey holding the hand of his keeper. The man brought the monkey to them.

"Panic," he said, briefly, then continued: "I'd gone into the cage; but someone saw the door open and this little fellow squatting on the wrong side of it. He's harmless; wouldn't budge an inch."

He looked around then added: "Such a pity. It could have been avoided; but panic!"

Later the three, on the cart, wended their way slowly down the lane. They spoke little; but thought a great deal.

NEWS AND VIEWS

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The Annual Meetings held in London in fine but cold April weather were notable for the new President's skill and humour in the chair. Mr. Chuter Ede is the first President who is also an M.P. and a former Cabinet Minister. The Annual Business Meeting placed before the denomination the challenge of preparing for 1962, the ter centenary of the year of the Great Ejection of Dissenting Ministers from the Church of England in 1662. The challenge is to win to our ranks another 10,000 members for our churches; that is to increase the number of professing Unitarians by half. The method is to be by means of an expanding series of Advance Campaigns all over the country, and it is proposed that next year's meetings shall include special sessions to tackle the most serious of the denominational problems we are facing—shortage of candidates for the ministry, problems of church organisation, finance, and others.

An unexpected success of the week was the Youth Meeting held at Bell Street Mission on Wednesday evening. The local Youth Organisations had planned a Youth Panel to discuss an address by the Rev. Ronald McGraw on "The Young Unitarian Faces the Modern World." The Assembly delegates were invited to support it, but the organisers did not expect they would (in any numbers). But they did—after all there was no Conversazione to go to!—and they had a wonderfully interesting evening, but no refreshments, as the pessimism of the organisers had catered for only three dozen or so, and dared not try Galilean methods to feed the multitude.

Great interest was shown in the presence of Bishop Istvan Petho of the Hungarian Unitarian Church and Mr. Jozsef Ferencz, the Lay President. They spoke at the Friday morning meeting along with Dr. S. van der Woude of the Secretariat of the I.A.R.F. in Holland, on the subject of "Liberal Religion in Europe."

THE CHURCHES

BRADFORD. BROADWAY AVENUE Church has provided new secretaries both for the Yorkshire Unitarian Lay Preachers' Union (Mrs. E. Newport), and the Yorkshire District Women's League (Mrs. Joliffe). A legacy of £20 has been left to the church by Mrs. Baker.

CULLOMPTON. Among recent efforts, including a Beetle Drive, an Easter Parade Social, a Coffee Morning at the Manse, and a Jumble Sale, the last named was the most profitable, realising £22.

DITCHLING. The annual meeting reported increased attendances during the year, increased subscriptions, and a happy and hopeful atmosphere. Several members of the congregation take turns to conduct services in rotation with visiting ministers.

IPSWICH. A bowl for flowers has been presented by Mrs. Williams.

KNUTSFORD. To make Unitarianism better known, specially advertised services are being held on the second Sunday each month, with addresses on different aspects of the Unitarian faith.

LIVERPOOL. A new joint ministry has started with the Rev. S. R. Butler in charge of three churches, HOPE STREET, GATEACRE, and SPEKE, with preaching help from the Rev. C. A. Piper. About 100 people were present at Hope Street on April 26th for a welcome meeting when other ministers and lay representatives gave their greetings. The annual District Sunday School Rally was held at Hope Street on May 11th. Rev. Norman Kirkham was preacher. The LIVERPOOL DISTRICT MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION held its Annual Meeting at WEST KIRBY on May 17th, when

Principal F. Kenworthy spoke on "Unitarianism, a Simple Faith." GATEACRE Chapel whose membership has increased so satisfactorily in the past three years is planning to effect a further 50 per cent. increase by 1962 in line with the General Assembly drive. The population of the district is still increasing.

LONDON. HACKNEY congregation held its Spring Fair on April 26th. At a recent service the colours of the 3rd Hackney Girl Guide Company were dedicated by the Rev. R. E. Goddard. The Sunday School and Junior Club attendance is on the increase. RICHMOND held a successful annual meeting in March with satisfactory reports. Last month's London note referred to WANDSWORTH, which name was accidentally omitted.

LYE held a successful Spring Fair on March 3rd organised by the Women's League. On Good Friday a United Service was held in the Chapel conducted by the Rev. Charles Simpson. The lessons were read by the Vicars of Lye and Stambermill, the local Methodist minister, and a deacon of the Congregational Church. The address was given by the Salvation Army Major, and the Salvation Army Songsters gave an anthem. The offertory of a full chapel was given to Inter-Church Aid and Refugee Service. The Rev. Charles Simpson conducted lunch-hour services at two engineering works on Good Friday. The Rev. Bruce Findlow conducted the 168th Chapel Anniversary Services on April 13th.

MANCHESTER. The Chapel at BLACKLEY has now been completely re-decorated, and several parts of the Sunday School, by working parties of members, most of the work being done by Mr. Seville, the caretaker. At ALTRINCHAM the 10th May Queen Festival was conducted by the Rev. Stanley Mossop owing to the prolonged absence of the Rev. A. W. Vallance with sciatica. Other services have been conducted by members of the congregation and the Rev. T. W. Roberts.

NORTHERN SUNDAY SCHOOL FEDERATION. The 113th annual meeting was held at RAWTENSTALL on Good Friday. Teas had been provided for 130, but when 186 people came to the morning service, conducted by the Rev. F. M. Ryde, M.A., the caterers had to start a run on the confectioners' shops, with such good effect that when tea-time came over 200 were supplied with great satisfaction. The situation gave point to Mr. Ryde's sermon, in which he had said: "When you are asked to do a job, don't say 'Why me?,' but rather, 'Why not me?' "

The most important business concerned the policy of the Hucklow Homes Committee, and two recommendations were adopted: First, that steps be taken to dispose of the present Holiday Home on the Tor along with the land, and that facilities for children be provided on other Homes property; secondly that plans be formulated and costs ascertained for at least one two-storey building on the Barleycrofts site. The Chairman of the Committee, Rev. Eric Wild, B.A., explained the need for a new approach to the problem, as the 1957 deficit was still £220, though this is a great reduction on previous years. The Secretaryship of the Homes Committee was now to become a voluntary office, and a warden was to be appointed to live in the Homes and be freed from much detailed routine work. (At a later date it was announced that the new warden as from May 5th would be Mr. Henry Tittle, of Pendleton). Mr. G. Waywell was elected Homes Secretary.

At the evening meeting presentations were made to the Rev. Eric and Mrs. Phillips on their departure from Hucklow for Rotherham, and prizes were presented to the winners of the Essay Competition. With Mr. J. R. Holt (Rawtenstall) as Question Master, a panel of four dealt with

questions on Sunday School work.

PLYMOUTH. Youth Sunday evening service was conducted by Mr. Richard Turpin and Mr. Alan Felgate who were both on short leave from the forces.

SIDMOUTH. 50 new "Pel" chairs have been bought for the Leigh Brown Room, and the Schoolroom.

STOCKPORT. For its Anniversary the Sunday School attended evening service and presented a lesson theme to the congregation in a well-thought-out service, and afterwards took charge of the monthly Social Hour. This helped school and congregation to feel that they were engaged in a significant partnership.

U.Y.P.L. The Drama Festival was won by Liverpool, Mill Street, branch. In February several members took part in a week-end work party "camping" in the Friends' Meeting House, Manchester, and going out to decorate rooms for problem families looked after by the Family Service Unit. The Easter week-end camp at Kinver was very well attended.

UNITARIANS IN THE NEWS

Tufts University, having heard that the Rev. Dr. A. L. Agnew's doctor's hood had been damaged during war-time air-raids, has presented him with a new one.

Mrs. M. R. Dickin at the annual meeting at Crewkerne received a presentation of flowers and a gift from the congregation in gratitude for her work as lay pastor.

The Rev. L. Chandler, B.A., of Rademon has accepted an invitation to Lydgate and Wakefield; the Rev. F. Terry, M.A., an invitation to Ringwood, and three students are to take pastorates at the end of the session: Mr. Kenneth Wright, B.A. (U.C.M.) at Bolton (Halliwell Road) with Walmsley, Mr. R. J. Williamson, B.A. (M.C.O.) at Walsall with West Bromwich, and Mr. G. J. Pruce (M.C.O.) at Hale.

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by W. G. Tarrant, B.A.
Reprinted with additional notes
1/6 by post 1/9
The Lindsey Press, 15, Gordon Square, London, W.C.1.

FOR THE STAGE

"The Wick and the Wax" (with separate production notes) has been published by the author, Alexander Wilson, 7, Corchester Walk, Newcastle-on-Tyne, 7, who is a member of the Church of the Divine Unity. Profits from the sale are to go to the Holiday Homes at Great Hucklow. The theme of the play is the sturdy nonconformity in a country village after the Ejection of 1662, the action taking place in 1665, the year of the Plague of London. The story owes something to that of the outbreak of plague in Eyam, and with eight characters would be well worth attempting by Unitarian dramatic societies. One stage set suffices for the three acts, and there is plenty of scope for characterisation and dramatic situation. The play was produced at the Playhouse, Derby, in 1956. It reads well too.

Human Nature and Christian Marriage, by W. P. Wylie (S.C.M. 8s. 6d.) is a first rate book on sex problems for the present time, which any minister or Youth Leader would do well to add to his library. The reasonableness of Christian principles in sex relationships is shown to be based on the intention that marriage shall bring the truest and fullest happiness to both partners. The writer is an experienced marriage-guidance counsellor.

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